



The elderly are often the victims of contractor scams for a number of reasons, including:

Many own older homes in need of repair. When a solicitor offers to make repairs or improvements, the homeowner is willing to listen.

Generally, senior homeowners have access to cash acquired from a lifetime of saving or equity in their homes.

Some seniors who live alone may feel intimidated by solicitors and believe they must agree to the pitch.

Many seniors are trusting by nature; they grew up in a time when a handshake was as good as a written contract.

Some elderly homeowners hesitate to report scams.

FACTS TO BUILD ON

Senior Scam Stopper Fact Sheet

The following are common contractor cons that seniors may face:

On-Your-Street Cheat

A door-to-door solicitor offers to do roofing, painting, or paving work at a reduced price by using left-over materials from a job just completed in the neighborhood. It sounds like a good deal to the elderly homeowner. The problems are that there is no recently completed job, no neighbor, and no left over materials. However, there is an unscrupulous contractor who demands cash, does little or no work, and then abandons the project.

Scare Tactic Racket

A home repair contractor claims that faulty wiring, bad plumbing or a leaky roof put the homeowner in danger and that repairs must be made immediately. Alarmed and unable to physically climb on a roof or crawl under a sink to verify the contractor's claim, the elderly homeowner agrees to unnecessary and over-priced work.

Cash 'N' Dash

A contractor demands cash for a home repair or remodeling job, sometimes going so far as to drive the elderly victim to the bank to withdraw funds. The unscrupulous contractor states the money is needed to buy materials or pay workers, but with cash in hand, the contractor drives off and never returns.

Down Payment Lowdown

A contractor takes an illegally large down payment or demands payment before work is completed. By law, a down payment on a home improvement project cannot be for more than 10 percent of the total project or \$1,000, whichever is less. The dishonest operator takes the money but never finishes the job.

Handshake Mistake

A contractor states that a written contract is unnecessary—promising to deliver on any verbal agreement. Some elderly homeowners have a trusting nature and consider a handshake to be as good as a written contract. The con artist takes advantage of this situation to perform shoddy work—or none at all.

(Continued on back)



FACTS TO BUILD ON *(Continued)*

Tips to Avoid Senior Scams:

- Unless you call them to come to your home, don't let salespeople into your house.
- Before you allow a contractor into your home, check the license with the CSLB.
- Never let others see where you keep your wallet, purse or checkbook.
- Check the ID of any service or repairperson or contractor.
- If anyone, including those claiming to be contractors, comes to your door and is suspicious, call local law enforcement.
- Don't pay cash.
- Refuse to pay up front for materials.
- Don't let payments get ahead of the work.
- Don't be intimidated into immediately withdrawing funds from the bank.
- Always get a written and signed contract for home improvements and repairs.